

had ever seen. The awe the memorial inspires reminds us all why this group of patriots is called the "greatest generation."

The 35 Kentucky World War II veterans I met were able to travel to Washington thanks to the nonprofit organization Honor Flight, which transports World War II veterans from anywhere in the country to see their memorial, free of charge. Many veterans, for physical or financial reasons, are unable to make the trip on their own, and so without Honor Flight they would not get the chance to visit the memorial created for them and their fellow fighters at all.

About 36,500 World War II veterans live in Kentucky today, with about 2.5 million throughout the country. Unfortunately, that number shrinks each day as time advances for these brave warriors. Honor Flight and its volunteers, many of whom are veterans themselves, are doing a great service for our Nation by making it possible for these veterans to make this important trip.

So this Memorial Day, I hope everyone says thank you to a man or woman who wore the uniform. We should remember the bravery of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. And while most of us will never know the heroism shown by the World War II veterans I was privileged to meet, we can marvel at the courage shown every day by our current generation of heroes serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I mentioned to the veterans from Kentucky yesterday my own father who served in Europe during World War II, who arrived after the Battle of the Bulge and was in the conflict from about March of 1945 forward, until he met with the Russians at Pilsen, which I believe is now in the Czech Republic. I mentioned to them that I have a letter he wrote to my mother. There were a number of letters, but this particular one is etched in my memory because it is dated May 8, 1945.

Underneath the date he wrote "V-E Day," so they were calling it Victory in Europe Day even then. He had seen some very severe fighting and lost a great many of his company, and one could sense the elation in his voice that the conflict was now ended.

But then there was a subsequent letter I thought was quite prophetic, particularly for a regular foot soldier who was not an officer. He had a chance to interact with some of the Russians because they met the Russians in Pilsen. He said to my mother: I think the Russians are going to be a big problem down the way.

So it was interesting that there was this sense, even to the foot soldiers, that our alliance with the Soviet Union was a short-term marriage of convenience and might subsequently be a big problem down the road. Of course, his prophecy was proven accurate.

While in Pilsen, he got a chance to befriend some Czechs, and I have some letters that were exchanged with

friends from what was then Czechoslovakia. He told me that all of those letters stopped a couple years later when the Iron Curtain descended across Europe and he was unable to communicate further with any of the Czech friends he made. I share that story of my own father on Memorial Day for my colleagues.

In closing, I would mention that the particular flight from Kentucky yesterday was dedicated to the memory of John Polivka, who had planned to be on the trip. He was a World War II veteran who planned to be on the trip but who passed away on Monday, May 19, just this week. So the veterans dedicated their Honor Flight to Washington to their colleague whom they had hoped would be able to join them. Even though there was great sadness over his loss, there was great joy in being able to witness the World War II Memorial which symbolizes their extraordinary contribution to our country.

I ask unanimous consent that names of the World War II veterans who were here this week be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

WORLD WAR II VETERANS

Homer Brown, Jr.; Joseph Raley; James Thomas; George Coffey; Charles Hanson; Donovan Chard; Bernie Carr; William Pickerill; Robert Barrow; Robert Davis; Gaine "Ed" Sipes; Emmett Leezer; Charles Mauer; Leroy Faber; Russell Harrison; Morell Milroy; Blue Lynch; George Wolford; Norman Inman; Frank Godbey; John Toy; Burnett Napier; Bobby Barker; Oscar La Fontaine; Joel O'Brien, Jr.; Louis Tracy; Garnett Clark; Joseph McFadden; Earl Wieting; Woodrow Bryant; Raymond Roggenkamp; Robert Weixler, Sr.; Richard Lewis; Thomas Shields; and Joseph Pottinger.

DIRECTORS OF THE HONOR FLIGHT

Brian Duffy, Jean Duffy, William Garwood, James T. MacDonald, and Robert Hendrickson.

This Honor Flight was dedicated to the memory of John Polivka, who passed away on Monday, May 19th.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I conclude by saying they were indeed the best of the "greatest generation."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, as a member of the Judiciary Committee, let me indicate that we are not entirely unfamiliar on the Judiciary Committee with Judge White. She was actually an appointee of President Clinton. For many months, she languished before the committee when it was under Republican control. So she should be a judge with whom at least a considerable number of the members of the Judiciary Committee would have been familiar from her previous appointment. Any suggestion that she

was a new arrival or a novelty of some kind to the committee would not be accurate.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an April 30, 2008, letter to the Republican leader and the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee signed by the majority leader, indicating, among other things, the following:

In a floor statement on April 15 I pledged my best efforts to have the Senate consider three circuit court nominations prior to the Memorial Day recess. I stand by my pledge. I cautioned explicitly that "I cannot guarantee" this outcome because it depends upon factors beyond my control. Nonetheless, I remain optimistic we can meet that goal.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER,
Washington, DC, April 30, 2008.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Senate Minority Leader,
Washington, DC.

Hon. ARLENE SPECTER,
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS MCCONNELL AND SPECTER:
Thank you for your letter yesterday regarding judicial nominations.

In a floor statement on April 15 I pledged my best efforts to have the Senate consider three circuit court nominations prior to the Memorial Day recess. I stand by my pledge. I cautioned explicitly that "I cannot guarantee" this outcome because it depends upon factors beyond my control. Nonetheless, I remain optimistic we can meet that goal.

A hearing for Fourth Circuit nominee Steven Agee, as well as district court nominees recommended by Senators Lugar and Kyl, will take place tomorrow afternoon. A hearing for Sixth Circuit nominees Raymond Kethledge and Helene White, as well as a Michigan district court nominee, will take place next Wednesday. Senator Leahy has expedited consideration of the Michigan nominees in light of my April 15 remarks.

Nothing in my pledge regarding judicial nominations deprived Chairman Leahy of his prerogative to determine the sequence of nomination hearings in his committee. No one presumed to instruct Senator Specter about the sequence of nominations during the years he served as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee. And certainly Senator Hatch exercised the chairman's prerogatives freely during the years in which more than sixty of President Clinton's nominees were denied hearings or floor consideration.

The Democratic majority has treated President Bush's judicial nominations with far greater deference than President Clinton was afforded by a Republican-controlled Senate. Three-quarters of President Bush's court of appeals nominees have been confirmed; in contrast, only half of President Clinton's appellate nominations were confirmed. Altogether, 145 of President Bush's judicial nominees, 90 percent of them, have been confirmed in the years that Democrats have controlled the Senate. Last year the Senate confirmed 40 judges, more than during any of the three previous years with Republicans in charge. The federal judicial vacancy rate is the lowest it has been in years.

Chairman Leahy and I will continue to work with you both to process judicial nominations in due course, consistent with the Senate's constitutional role.

Sincerely,

HARRY REID.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, thank you. I appreciate that.

COLONEL EDWARD CYR

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, one of the great privileges that I have as a Member of this body is to travel around my home State of Rhode Island and hear directly from the people I was elected to serve. We are a small State, and we all know one another pretty well. So it is a pleasure to get out and listen to people, to hear what is on their minds, their good news and their bad news, and the challenges and the opportunities they and their families face each and every day.

One of the things we do is to regularly hold community dinners around the State. My wife Sandra and I get together with folks over pasta and meatballs or hamburgers and hot dogs and we talk about the issues that are interesting to them.

Mr. President, having the opportunity to hear people of my State share their stories this way has made such a difference in my work here in Washington. I say to the Presiding Officer, I know that as you represent the people in Florida, you feel very much the same way and I've heard you both in committee and on this floor give speeches and remarks that have focused on individual constituents of yours who had troubles and problems that they needed to attend to and you needed to attend to. So I know that you feel very much the same way.

You know, we stand in this Chamber and we debate back and forth on the war in Iraq or the price of a gallon of gas or the crisis in the housing industry. But when we go back home, we see people who are living in the middle of these issues every day. In Rhode Island right now, there are parents worrying about their sons and daughters serving overseas in Iraq. There are families watching the numbers on the gas pump roll, roll, roll, flying higher and higher, and they are wondering how they are going to make ends meet. And there are working people who see their mortgage payments climb out of reach, and they face the gnawing, terrible fear that they might lose the home their children grew up in. So, as glorious as is this grand Chamber we have the opportunity to serve in, the reason we are really here is that it is all about them.

And last Sunday evening, we had one of those moments. We hosted a community dinner in Bristol, RI, which is a beautiful, historic town on Rhode Island's East Bay. Bristol is known for many wonderful things, but one is the oldest—and I think the best—Fourth of July parade in the United States of America. So it was great to be in Bristol, and it was a beautiful evening. The day had been rainy, and toward the end of the day, the clouds had begun to open up and the evening Sun was shining through on the clouds above. The earth and the trees were still wet around, but they were lit up by the lit

sky, and we were in this handsome stone VFW hall that is just a little bit back from Bristol Harbor. It was beautiful not only outside but inside because we had a wonderful group of people. And as the questions and answers were winding down toward the end of the evening, a man stood up and he took the microphone, and he began to speak.

The man was COL Edward Cyr. Colonel Cyr is a 29-year veteran of the Army Reserves, 399th Combat Support Hospital. He has served two tours in Iraq, first in 2003 and then again from June 2006 to October 2007, and was also deployed to Kosovo in 2001. When he is not serving our country in the Army Reserves, Colonel Cyr is a nurse anesthetist at Saint Anne's Hospital in Massachusetts. He is a loving husband to his wife Patricia, and he is the father to five daughters.

Colonel Cyr wanted to tell me about a provision in the 2008 Defense authorization bill which grants early retirement eligibility to reservists and National Guard members who have served on Active Duty since September 11, to allow these individuals to gain 3 months of retirement eligibility for every 90 days of Active service.

He was concerned that the effective date of the legislation was set for the date of its passage, and that it did not reach back to September 11 to pick up all the veterans who had served since that date. I agreed to help him with that legislation, to make the date of the early retirement provision retroactive to September 11, 2001, so that it would reach every veteran in this conflict who served our country and carried the burden of a disastrous war policy with such great honor and dignity.

And often people come with a specific request like that, but that was not what was significant about this. What was significant about this was that Colonel Cyr took the chance to tell his story.

He spoke of the strains of his multiple deployments which have weighed so heavily upon him and his family. He spoke of the blood of the wounded soldiers he worked on, on his hands, on his clothes, in his very pores. He spoke of their service and their loss and his pride in the men and women who served beside him. When he was done, the big room was quiet.

I asked him—I was a little embarrassed to ask because I did not want to ask a personal question that might not be welcome, but I asked him anyway: I said, Colonel, if I may ask a personal question, what was your family situation through all of this? He paused a minute, and he said: Well, Senator, I am glad you asked that question because my wife is sitting right beside me. And he proudly pointed her out, and he said this: For all those months, over three tours, she had to go it alone, raising my five daughters, and I want to take this chance to thank her because if it weren't for her, I wouldn't have had a home to come home to.

Mr. President, you could have heard a pin drop. There was not a dry eye in the House, including my own. And the room then burst into applause.

Mr. President, this was just one of those moments—just one of those moments. I do not think I can explain it, and frankly, I do not even want to try because if I tried to explain it, I would just make it smaller. So all I want to say, as we all leave this glorious Chamber to go home to our States to celebrate this Memorial Day weekend, for all the Edward Cyrs and for all the Patricia Cyrs across this country, thank you and God bless you.

Mr. President, I believe there is no quorum present.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEROES EARNINGS ASSISTANCE AND RELIEF TAX ACT OF 2008

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6081, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6081) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide benefits for military personnel, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read three times and passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements related to the bill be printed in the Record.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 6081) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, on Memorial Day in 1884, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said:

It is now the moment when by common consent we pause to become conscious of our national life and to rejoice in it, to recall what our country has done for each of us, and to ask ourselves what we can do for our country in return.

I am pleased that today, on the eve of the Memorial Day weekend, the Senate has been able to recall what our service men and women have done for each of us. I am pleased that we can do something for them in return. And I am pleased that we have been able to pass the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2008.

Nearly 1.5 million American service men and women have served in Iraq, Afghanistan, or both. Nearly 30,000